

In 2021, Kosovo made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government adopted two administrative instructions to facilitate implementation of the new Law on Child Protection, and law enforcement agencies made use of new technologies developed specifically to track child labor cases. Government entities and civil society organizations also participated in trainings on juvenile justice and social protection for vulnerable youth, and the government continued to support a number of social programs for at-risk children. However, children in Kosovo are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work, including begging and loading and transporting goods. The Labor Inspectorate and Centers for Social Work face financial and human resource constraints, which may impede their ability to adequately address child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Kosovo are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in street work, including begging and loading and transporting goods. (1-5) No recent data were available, but the 2013 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey determined that 5,398 children in Kosovo were subjected to child labor. (6,7) The study also found that 2,168 Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian children were subjected to hazardous child labor practices, especially street work. (5,8) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Kosovo. Data on some of these indicators are not available from the sources used in this report.

Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	9.0 (Unavailable)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	95.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	11.7
Primary Completion Rate (%)		Unavailable

Primary completion rate was unavailable from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2021. (9)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS 6), 2019–2020. (10)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/ Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Farming, including operating agricultural machinery† (2-4,11)
	Forestry, including operating machinery and transporting wood (3,12)
Industry	Mining, including underground extraction of coal by hand† (3,4,11)
	Construction and manufacturing, including operation of tools in hazardous worksites† (3,11,12)
Services	Street work,† including vending small items,† manual transport of goods,† and begging† (3,4,11,12)
	Garbage scavenging at dumpsites† (4,11,13,14)

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/ Industry	Activity
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Forced begging (1,2,4,5,11)
	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,2,4,11,12)
	Use in illicit activities, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (4,11,15)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.







Kosovo is a source and destination country for child trafficking, especially of girls. (1,3,4,12) In addition, children are sometimes forced into labor, such as in massage parlors, by organized criminal groups. (1,4,16,17) Kosovan children and children from neighboring countries, especially Albania, are also forced into street work, including begging, primarily in Prizren and Pristina. Most of these children come from the Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian minority ethnic groups. (1,4,5,12,16-23) Economically vulnerable Kosovan children are sometimes forced to work in construction and agriculture to support their families. (12)

Children from minority ethnic communities, especially girls, sometimes experience difficulty accessing education, in part due to a lack of native-language educational materials and insufficient subsidized transportation for rural children. In addition, according to national standards on education, children should not be excluded from schooling due to a lack of birth documentation, but some undocumented child laborers encountered challenges to school enrollment. (4,24-27) Children who do not attend school are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. (28)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Kosovo holds a unique status *vis-à-vis* UN recognition that complicates its ratification of international agreements (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	N/A
 ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A
 UN CRC	N/A
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	N/A
 UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	N/A
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	N/A

Article 22 of Kosovo’s Constitution incorporates the UN CRC into its national legal framework. (29) Despite Kosovo’s unique status, the country worked with the UN through the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021–2025), which was implemented by the UN Kosovo Team and focused on promoting international standards and human rights. (30)

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Kosovo’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	15	Article 7 of the Law on Labor (31)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 20, 23, 26, 27, and 45 of the Law on Labor (31)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Administrative Instruction No. 05/2013; Article 45 of the Law on Labor; Administrative Instruction No. 2008 (31-33)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 6 of the Law on Labor; Articles 163 and 165 of the Criminal Code; Law on the Prevention and Elimination of Human Trafficking and Protection of the Victims of Trafficking (31,34,35)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 165 and 166 of the Criminal Code; Law on the Prevention and Elimination of Human Trafficking and Protection of the Victims of Trafficking; Articles 21 and 22 of Administrative Instruction No. 10/2017 (34-36)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 232 and 234 of the Criminal Code; Articles 47 and 62 of the Law on Child Protection (35,37)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Articles 267–273 of the Criminal Code; Article 43 of the Law on Child Protection (35,37)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 6 of the Law on the Kosovo Security Force (38)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	Yes		Article 149 of the Criminal Code; Articles 38 and 39 of the Law on Child Protection (35,39)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 9 of the Law on Pre-University Education (40)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 9 of the Law on Pre-University Education (40)

* Country has no conscription (41)

‡ Age calculated based on available information (40)

In 2021, the Ministry of Finance, Labor, and Transfers (MFLT) began to draft amendments to two existing Administrative Instructions on the prevention and prohibition of hazardous child labor and the identification, reporting, and referral of exploitation, negligence, and abuse of children. (4) During the reporting period, the government instituted the new Administrative Instruction for the Implementation of Child-Friendly Justice in Criminal, Civil, and Administrative Proceedings. The government also began drafting the Administrative Instruction on Measures for the Protection of Children against Websites with Pornographic Content and those that Harm the Health and Life of the Child. (4) In 2021, Save the Children cooperated with the MFLT to establish secondary legislation allowing for sustained financing for child protection services, in addition to securing comprehensive shelter and residential services for children without parental care, and continuing efforts to prevent hazardous child labor. (4)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the framework of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Labor Inspectorate	Conducts inspections to enforce child labor laws, removes children engaged in hazardous work, and refers children engaged in hazardous work to regional Centers for Social Work. (4)
Kosovo Police (KP)	Enforce criminal laws on forced child labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Through the Anti-Trafficking Directorate, enforce laws on child trafficking. (2,3,11) Operate under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. (4)

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Justice	Enforces criminal laws on forced child labor, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of children through special anti-human trafficking coordinators and mechanisms. (11)
Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation	Conducts education inspections regarding the balance of students' school and work hours. (42)

There is limited inter-ministerial communication between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other government entities on issues concerning policymaking and enforcement related to child labor. (3,4,25) Multiple entities have reported that there is insufficient institutional capacity at the central and municipal levels and a need to improve funding and human resources for the Centers for Social Work (CSWs). This lack of institutional commitment compromised the ability of CSWs to address cases of child labor in a competent and adequate manner. (4,15,43-45) In March 2021, the Ministries of Infrastructure and Environment, Economy, and Health, and MFLT were tasked with the duties of the former Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. (4)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2021, labor law enforcement agencies in Kosovo took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including insufficient human resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$894,784 (4)	\$920,700 (4)
Number of Labor Inspectors	37 (11)	37 (7)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (11)	Yes (31)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	N/A (11)	N/A
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (11)	No (7)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (11)	No (7)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	7,105 (11)	10,162 (7)
Number Conducted at Worksite	7,105 (11)	4,623 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (11)	0 (7)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (11)	N/A
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (11)	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (3)	Yes (7)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (11)	Yes (7)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (31)	Yes (31)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (11)	Yes (7)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (11)	Yes (4)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (11)	Yes (4)

Labor inspectors have the authority to inspect private farms; however, due to a lack of human resource capacity to adequately cover all sectors and regions, the CSWs, which also face human resource and budgetary constraints, typically conduct these inspections. (4,28,46,47)

During the reporting period, the Labor Inspectorate continued to operate under its comprehensive strategy for conducting child labor inspections. (4,11,48,49) Labor inspectors receive initial training when hired; however, these initial trainings do not cover child labor as a separate category. (11,49)

The Labor Inspectorate's mandate allows it to investigate employment contracts for working children between ages 15 and 18 who have entered into an employment contract for a limited period. When child labor is discovered, the Labor Inspectorate issues the penalty and works with the Kosovo Police (KP) to remove

the child from child labor. (4,31-33) In addition, the Labor Inspectorate coordinates inspections with CSWs for suspected abuse of children under age 15. According to NGO and media reports, the number of cases reported does not fully reflect the actual number of child labor cases due to the high level of labor market informality. (11,12,50)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2021, criminal law enforcement agencies in Kosovo took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including a lack of training for criminal investigators on the identification of forced begging cases.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2020	2021
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	No (11)	No (4)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	No (11)	No (4)
Refresher Courses Provided	No (11)	No (4)
Number of Investigations	62 (11)	124 (4)
Number of Violations Found	79 (11)	99 (4)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	37 (11)	67 (4)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	7 (4)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (11)	Yes (4)

The KP tracks children referred to CSWs as a result of investigations conducted by its domestic violence and human trafficking units. (11,51) In 2021, the KP received a number of trainings related to child labor, including trainings on the protection of children who commit criminal offenses and proper procedures for assisting refugee and migrant children, as well as a workshop for police about the standard operating procedures followed by social workers. In addition, the Kosovo Justice Academy provided a workshop on the worst forms of child labor for judges and prosecutors, and the Ministry of Justice participated in a regional conference on strengthening protections for children who have come into conflict with the law. (4,52)

In 2021, the KP identified 19 children as victims of human trafficking and forced labor in commercial prostitution and 3 children as victims of child pornography. Furthermore, the KP reported that 124 new investigations were opened against suspected human traffickers and that 13 cases from the previous year were still under review. (4) During the reporting period, 306 children were identified as having taken part in child begging by the KP through both targeted operations and routine traffic inspections. One individual was indicted on charges of trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced labor after allegedly forcing seven children to engage in street vending by selling small items in Pristina. (4) However, authorities did not consistently identify cases of forced begging, which are instead typically classified as parental neglect or abuse. (11,16,43)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

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Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
Committee for Prevention and Elimination of Hazardous Forms of Child Labor	Coordinates government policies to combat child labor. Oversees and provides policy guidance for activities to prevent and eliminate child labor. (11) Chaired by the Minister of Finance, Labor, and Transfers. (4) Comprises representatives of government agencies, KP, trade unions, and an NGO. (2) Met twice during the reporting period. In 2021, the Committee drafted a revised action plan to facilitate coordination of efforts to prevent hazardous child labor at the central and local levels of government, in addition to creating sub-legislation related to the 2020 Law on Child Protection. (4)
Child Labor Monitoring System	Addresses child labor at the municipal level, identifies and provides existing child services, documents child labor trends, and evaluates local responses to child labor. (3) During the reporting period, child labor monitoring efforts included moving digital management of child labor cases from the government's social services database to the purview of the newly formed Ministry of Finance, Labor, and Transfers. (4)
National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP)	Coordinates policy implementation, and monitors and reports on actions to combat child trafficking through a National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (NATC). (17) NATC is a deputy Interior Minister. (50,53) Includes representatives from the government, judiciary, municipal offices, NGOs, and the international community. (53,54) During the reporting period, NAATIP continued to hold regular meetings. (55)
Municipal Local Action Committees	Aim to prevent and eliminate child labor; report to the Child Labor Monitoring System. Members include representatives from schools, municipal education departments, and KP. (11) Research was unable to determine whether the municipal local action committees were active during the reporting period.

Since 2013, the government has been collecting and processing data on labor violations, which it then makes available to all ministries and law enforcement bodies. (3)

During the reporting period, the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Rights of the Child met to discuss efforts to reduce child poverty, expand protections for children with disabilities, and improve children's health services. (56) The MFLT also finalized materials dictating the roles and standard operating procedures necessary for prevention, identification, data gathering, referral, and treatment of children found to be engaged in hazardous child labor. The MFLT also began to use a new digital case management system for child labor, replacing the previous system which was under the government social services system. (4) The Ministry of Agriculture has also conducted awareness-raising activities for parents and children highlighting the risks of child labor. (45,57)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Children's Rights Action Plan (2019–2021)	Aimed to improve social, economic, and legislative rights and the protection of children through developing institutions at the local and national levels. (58,59) Included an accompanying Children's Rights Strategy (2019–2023). (45,58,59) Active in 2021. (4)
Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2019–2023)	Calls for a comprehensive framework of policies for the protection of children's rights, including the prevention, protection, and reintegration of children involved in hazardous child labor practices such as street work and underground ore extraction. (11) Active in 2021. (4)
Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities (2017–2021)	Focused on employment, social issues, healthcare, and housing for the Ashkali and Roma communities. Aimed to strengthen individuals' rights and full integration into society. (3) Included targeted components that promoted inclusive education for children from the Ashkali and Roma communities. (60) Active in 2021. (4)
Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (2017–2021)	Emphasized the inclusion of vulnerable minorities in the education system, especially for preschool children of the Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian communities. Established regulations at the municipality level to facilitate preschool enrollment and raise awareness of school attendance and enrollment. (61) Active in 2021. (4)
Regulation on the Implementation of the Rights of Children Through a Child-Friendly Municipal Governance System	Protects and promotes the rights of children. Ensures that municipalities are child friendly and guarantees that all children benefit from social services, education, and safety. (62) Active in 2021. (4)

During the reporting period, the National Strategy Against Human Trafficking (2020–2024) was partially implemented through awareness campaigns, trainings for law enforcement and the judiciary, and raids initiated by the KP. (4)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2021, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, which cover the main sectors where child labor has been identified in the country (Table 10).

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Hope and Homes for Children†	Government-funded NGO shelter. Accommodates child victims of abuse and human trafficking. (47) Active in 2021. (4)
UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021–2025)*	Funded and implemented by the UN Kosovo Team. Promotes international standards and human rights safeguards of migrants and the social protection and educational inclusion of the Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian communities. (30) Prioritizes four areas: (1) accountable governance; (2) inclusive and non-discriminatory social policies and services; (3) resilient, sustainable, and inclusive economic development; and (4) social cohesion. (3,11) Active in 2021. (4)
UN Kosovo/UNICEF Program (2021–2025)*	Aims to increase availability of early childhood education opportunities, inclusion of children with disabilities, and justice for children through data generation and evidence-based policymaking. (30,63) Active in 2021. (4)
The Helpline‡	Government-operated hotline for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. (16) Active in 2021. (4)
Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement (MAP 16) Project on Child Labor and Forced Labor	USDOL-funded global project implemented by ILO to (1) improve the knowledge base on child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking; (2) improve awareness of these issues through the use of data-driven techniques; (3) strengthen policies and improve the capacity of governments and other stakeholders to combat child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking through national, regional, and global initiatives; and (4) strengthen partnerships to accelerate progress in combating child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking. In Kosovo, the project aims to build the capacity of the government and other stakeholders to address child labor. Additional information is available on the USDOL website. (64)

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (4,65,66)

Social services professionals in Kosovo estimate that approximately 4,300 children receive assistance per year. (44) In 2021, the government continued to provide social assistance for at-risk families and provided educational support through virtual education initiatives and providing textbooks for children impacted by school closures due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. (4)

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) and Save the Children began implementation of a program supporting early childhood education opportunities for children throughout Kosovo. Save the Children's programming includes special consideration of the educational needs of children with disabilities and children from vulnerable communities. (4,67) In addition, the Kosovo Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD) made an action pledge for the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor in which the agency committed to work with enforcement agencies to prevent and detect child labor in agriculture and forestry, and to refer child laborers to services. As part of this commitment, the Kosovo Forestry Agency (a sub-agency of MAFRD) began to require inclusion of a clause prohibiting hazardous child labor in forestry in all contracts it issues. (68,69)

In October 2021, the Program for Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (2021–2025) was adopted to establish affirmative measures to assist marginalized communities, including vulnerable children. The program seeks in part to provide compensation for child victims of trafficking in persons, and also includes measures to provide mediation for child offenders. (4)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Kosovo (Table 11).

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that Centers for Social Work have sufficient capacity, human resources, and training to address the specific needs of child labor victims.	2018 – 2021
	Incorporate topics on child labor, including hazardous child labor, in both new employee training and refresher courses offered by the Labor Inspectorate and law enforcement; ensure that trainings on new child labor laws are provided to all labor inspectors and law enforcement personnel.	2017 – 2021
	Ensure that the Kosovo Police are trained to identify and properly classify cases of forced begging.	2020 – 2021
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement authorities receive adequate training on violations related to child labor.	2021
Coordination	Ensure that the municipal local action committees are active.	2012 – 2021
	Ensure that inter-ministerial communication between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other government entities on issues concerning policymaking and enforcement related to child labor is improved.	2021
Government Policies	Ensure that the National Strategy Against Human Trafficking for 2020–2024 is fully implemented.	2020 – 2021
Social Programs	Collect and publish data on the extent and nature of child labor to inform policies and programs.	2017 – 2021
	Eliminate barriers and make education accessible for all children, including by making additional efforts to register Ashkali, Balkan Egyptian, and Roma children at birth and ensuring the availability of native-language teaching materials and subsidized transportation.	2011 – 2021

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